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Letters
continued

Co synthesised this remarkable catalyst prior to the advent of the kind of high resolution technique that I described.

The second point concerns the advantages of HREM. Its merits should be compared with X-ray diffraction not X-ray microscopy as stated in the published article.

J. M. Thomas *Cambridge*

Aerosols and ozone

The article "Spray cans; the threat that never was", by Michael Allaby and Jim Lovelock (17 July, p 212) alleges in Figure 2 and the accompanying description:

(*a*) Rowland and Molina originally estimated the steady state ozone depletion from continued release of chlorofluoromethanes as 18 per cent;

(*b*) this estimate was made in early 1974;

(*c*) "No prediction is as high as Rowland and Molina's original figure."

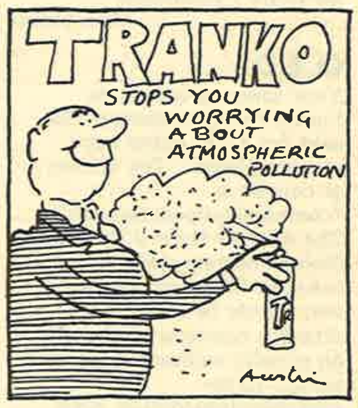
All three of these statements are false.

Our initial estimate of 10 per cent steady state ozone depletion with the continued release of freons, chlorofluoromethanes (CFC), was first publicly stated by one of us (F.S.R.) at the American Chemical Society meeting in Atlantic City in September 1974, with the additional estimate of a range from 7 to 13 per cent as an indication of the uncertainties involved. The estimate of 10 per cent ozone depletion was printed rather widely at the time, in such journals as (*New Scientist*, 26 September, 1974, p 781) and *Chemical and Engineering News* (23 September, 1974, p 6). John Gribbin (*New Scientist*, 15 February, 1979, p 475) has said, "early attempts . . . came up with a prediction of long-term steady-state depletion of 7 to 13 per cent for continued release of fluorocarbons at 1972 rates."

There was no Rowland-Molina estimate early in 1974, and our first publication (*Nature*, 28 June, 1974) contained no quantitative estimate of expected ozone depletion from the continued release of chlorofluoromethanes.

Numerous calculations of estimated ozone depletions have exceeded our original figure of 10 per cent, even including some of those in the bizarre "historical" set displayed in Figure 2 of the 17 July article. However, it is somewhat surprising that the authors were unaware of any calculations more recent than 1977, and that *New Scientist* let Figure 2 be published as though it were both accurate and up-to-date. We would suggest that, at the least, the following might have been included:

John Gribbin (*New Scientist*, 15 February, 1979, p 475), "a NASA study reported in 1977 which shifted the estimates back up around 15 per cent, and a further shift last year toward 20 per cent."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STOPS YOU WORRYING ABOUT ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION
Austin

Michael Kenward (*New Scientist*, 25 October, 1979, p 252), reporting on *Pollution Paper* No. 15 of the Department of the Environment, "current predictions suggest that the amount of ozone in the stratosphere could fall by 11 to 16 per cent if the release of CFCs continues at present levels."

This Week (*New Scientist*, 15 November, 1979, p 502), reporting on the US National Academy of Sciences Report of the Panel on Stratospheric Chemistry and Transport, "there is clear evidence that continued release of these compounds at present levels will lead to a long term reduction in the ozone concentration of the stratosphere of 16·5 per cent."

We note, too, that Allaby and Lovelock have quoted from the other National Academy of Sciences report, issued in late 1979, "Protection against depletion of stratospheric ozone by chlorofluorocarbons", but have chosen not to use in Figure 2 one of the key findings of this report (p 5), "the most probable value of eventual ozone depletion would be 16 per cent".

We find little comfort in the fact that all the percentage ozone depletions listed in the preceding paragraphs for 1979 calculations exceed the "original Rowland-Molina" estimate, and no comfort whatsoever in the readily observable steady increase in the accumulated amounts of the chlorofluoromethanes in the Earth's atmosphere.

F. Sherwood Rowland
Mario J. Molina
University of California
at Irvine

C. O. D.

I was amused to read about John Bradbury Sykes the scientist who edited my edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* ("The *New Scientist* interview", 4 September, p 718) which defines NERC as the abbreviation of National Environment Research Council. It is, of course, the Natural Environment Research Council!

Gordon Chancellor *Oxford*

Not out!

Edmund Seyd's letter (21 August, p 613) clearly illustrates his lack of cricket knowledge, or more especially a lack of the laws of the game.

First, on appeal an umpire must give a batsman out, if required to do so; secondly the appeal may be for a leg-before-wicket but the ball then went on to stumps which often happens. Just because most batsman "walk" does not mean that one has to. Also a bowled decision over-rides an lbw which probably explains the appeal.

If Mr Seyd was not allowing any artistic licence why did he not point out that the sight screen was positioned in the wrong place?

G. S. Dacosta
Member, Association of
Cricket Umpires
Woodford Green

Correction

The third sentence of the second paragraph in "Gene spliced insulin goes on trial" (This Week, 31 July, p 351) should have read "Of the many patients who survive into adult life only one in 10 is likely to develop blindness after 20 years of suffering from diabetes."

News Editor

Einstein, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen, quantum theory makes predictions about certain widely separated systems which Einstein's relativity theory declares cannot possibly be true. In other words, experiments will show that *either quantum theory or relativity theory is correct, but not both.*

Hiley's article gives some indication of this when he says that "one popular proposal" to explain the ghostly interaction predicted by quantum theory is through signals which travel faster than light. What he omits to say is that Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen proved that, if the ghostly interaction were observed, then such signals would give the *only* possible explanation.

This is why an experimental test, along the lines suggested by Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen, is important. Hiley gives us the impression that such experiments have already been performed, and given results favouring quantum theory. This is an incorrect assessment, since all these experiments are of the "static" type, and, as I have pointed out in three recent articles in *Physics Letters* (vol 75A, p 265; vol 78A, p 15; vol 78A, part 6), their results are readily explained, *either* by quantum theory *or* by models which are consistent with relativity theory. Only one of the experiments so far proposed (Alain Aspect's experiment) comes anywhere near providing a genuine discrimination between these theories, and no results have yet been reported from it.

In view of the enormous amount of evidence supporting both quantum theory and relativity theory, any statements about one or the other having been refuted by the results of the static experiments are premature. Some supporters of quantum theory have gained a certain amount of publicity by making such statements, even anticipating the results of the Aspect experiment (for example, Bernard d'Espagnat's article "Quantum theory and reality" in *Scientific American*, November 1979, and Paul Davies's book *Other Worlds,* published recently). In my view, such work should be properly classified as science fiction.

T. W. Marshall *Manchester*

Premature announcement

In "New homes for science and technology" (This Week, 21 August, p 575), it was stated that "a marriage had been consumated" between Associated Dairies (ASDA), Earthlife Foundation and the Southwark Quays Consortium.

This is not yet strictly true. To date, Earthlife and Southwark Quays have indeed formed a consortium and discussions took place recently with ASDA with a view to reaching a tripartite arrangement. We hope to make an announcement shortly.

Nigel Tuersley
Earthlife Foundation
Winchester

Q.E.D.

Your tame cartoonist in Forum (4 September, p 728) asks for a "25 letter word meaning brief". The answer, of course, is "contrasesquipedalianistic". The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (being shorter) stops at sesquipedalianism, but we may surely be allowed to attach a common prefix and an equally common adjectival suffix? To be contrasesquipedalian, *verb. sap.*

Walter Shepherd *Salisbury*

Don't comet here!

Why poke fun at ESA's choice of the name *Giotto* for its planned spaceprobe to comet Halley in 1986?

Edmund Halley got his name attached to the comet for simple if tediously long dynamical calculations which fortunately—as the comet has high inclination and suffers little planetary perturbation—allowed him to predict the 1759 return with tolerable accuracy.

Giotto di Bondani's contribution can be ranked qualitatively higher. He depicted a large, fiery head of light, pulsing with energy, possessing a central bright condensation and striated tail, and imparting a dynamic impression of the arc traced by the comet's passage across the sky (*ESA SCI* (80) 3, 1980). The Bayeux tapestry's crude stylisation and the Eadwine Psalter's sketch of a "hairy star" cited by J. C. Zarnecki (Letters, 4 September, p 734) stand no comparison.

Giotto's representation in the *Adoration of the Magi* can thus be regarded as the earliest recorded scientific description, dating from the dawn of European science and extolling the virtue of accurate observation. Even the English should appreciate that the name Giotto is very appropriate for this collaborative west European space probe (not "satellite", O learnéd Mr Zarnecki) aimed at a great leap in scientific understanding—of the nature and formation of this primitive Solar System material, and of the basic mechanisms of long mysterious cometary phenomena.

M. K. Wallis *Cardiff*

Eleutherococcus

If all the claims for benefit from taking eleutherococcus so enthusiastically listed by Stephen Fulder ("The drug that builds Russians", 24 August, p 576) are valid, it seems wilfully perverse of him to jib at describing it as a panacea.

The scientific evaluation of traditional medicines has in the past yielded important new substances effective in treating human disease—reserpine is an outstanding example. The availability of eleutherococcus glycosides, first isolated and characterised by Ovodov and his group (not Elyakov, who did the same for ginseng), will doubtless lead also to their investigation.

Soviet authors in this field, however, lay emphasis not on the treatment of disease, but on the use of eleutherococcus and ginseng among others "as medicines for healthy people", as Professor Brekhman said in a lecture at Chelsea College last year. One of the criteria for such "adaptogens" is that they should "enhance the non-specific resistance of the organism to harmful influences in the environment". Fulder's assertion that "scientists in Russia and Far Eastern countries know how to test" for such a property remains to be proved. How, and with what other drugs, for example, was it shown in lorry drivers and pilots that eleutherococcus can "counteract the *potentially* dangerous side-effects of *other* medication" (my italics)?

Perhaps the clue to an answer lies in Fulder's word-coining exercise. Had he stuck to Greek, then instead of the Greco-Latin hybrid "somatensic", he would have got "somatonic". The difficulty of testing the claims made for tonics of all kinds is so notorious that the possibility of "thousands of millions of Russians and Orientals taking useless remedies and becoming invigorated by belief alone" should not be ignored.

Frank Lesser *London*

Having corresponded with Brekhman, and taken eleutherococcus beneficially for many months, may I comment on Stephen Fulder's interesting article on this medicinal plant? Should it really be classified as a drug, "somatensic" or otherwise? Leaving aside the Anglo-Saxon origins of the word (something to do with drying?) shouldn't it be classified according to its usual function? As Fulder shows, it's a health-restorative, and an adaptogen (eg it enables one to cope better with stress). It does provide energy and stamina but not directly. You can stop taking it at least a day before a strenuous performance and still benefit from it, because of the improvement in general health.

Drugs seem to be given mainly to control either infections, or degenerative diseases; or else (in psychiatry) moods; any beneficial effect on your general health is indirect, as a result of the removal of the symptom etc. Eleutherococcus (and ginseng too) could be classified either as medicine or as food. This seems to be Brekhman's point of view in his book *Man and Biologically Active Substances* (English translation 1980, Pergamon Press), which is most valuable.

T. S. Bazley *Near Hatherop*

Near-atomic resolution

Two expressions that appear in "Minerals under the microscope" (21 August, p 580) were not coined by me. They were introduced at the editorial stage and not eliminated prior to publication. While it is true that HREM now greatly assists the characterisation of many new zeolitic catalysts, it is misleading to state (legend to Figure 3 of my article) that the "synthesis of ZSM-5 was aided by HREM". The Mobil power will win a slim majority, as they have in most of the nuclear referenda in other states, no one is yet betting on the result. Residents of Maine have a reputation for being terse and independent.

The seeds for the referendum were sown in spring of last year, in a series of coincidental happenings. First, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) ordered Central Maine Power, which runs Maine Yankee, to shut down the reactor while it (the NRC) checked the station's ability to withstand earthquakes. Shortly after came Three Mile Island. Then, while the plant was still shut down, a minor earthquake rumbled through the state—centred on Wiscasset. The events were too much for Raymon Shadis, a local teacher and farmer. He organised a group that petitioned the state government to ban the nuclear reactor. When the legislature rejected the move, the Maine nuclear referendum committee came into being, to take the issue directly to the voters. The nuclear industry quickly rallied its supporters and formed a group called the Save Maine Yankee Committee, and the scene was set for the electoral struggle.

TWO issues dominate the campaign: safety and economics. The referendum committee argues that the plant endangers state residents, and can be phased out without too much expense. The committee devoted to keeping the plant retorts that its safety record is excellent, and that the state simply cannot afford in the years ahead to do without nuclear power.

The two sides disagree strongly on the question of alternatives to Maine Yankee, which provides one third of the state's energy as well as power for neighbouring states. Because New England relies heavily on imported, rather than domestic, oil, nuclear interests say that it will cost about $140 million annually to replace the lost energy—an amount that would increase electricity bills by 200 per cent during a bleak economic period. The referendum committee disagrees. By refurbishing abandoned hydropower dams and co-generating electricity with exhaust gases from factories, it contends, officials could compensate for the loss of Maine Yankee at a cost of no more than $88 million per year—amounting to about 10 cents per day for each resident of the state.

Money could also influence the result of the referendum. Both sides agree that the Save Maine Yankee Committee will out-spend the referendum group by at least five to one in the effort to get its message across to voters. In some of the previous nuclear referendums, the industry's ability to raise vastly more money than the anti-nuclear lobbyists has plainly counted at the ballot box. But a recent poll showed that one third of Maine's voters are still undecided on the issue. Thus, even though they have most of the state's political establishment on their side, the pro-nuclear people will be holding their breath until the votes are counted. □

Brighton belles

WHEN the local councillors of Brighton meet at the end of the summer season to decide whether to continue the experiment of the now famous nudist beach, one thing they might bear in mind is the recent financial success of the council-owned seafront Volks Railway. Business on this venerable line—the first public electric railway in the world—has been booming ever since the new Marina was built at the end of it. But this year, traffic has been heavier still. Could it be a coincidence that passengers get a fleeting glimpse of the famous beach as they sweep by at a respectable Victorian walking pace? Maybe. But if so, how do you account for the fact that while in recent years the line has sold an average of two adult tickets for every child passenger, this year the ratio is almost exactly *three* to one? □

WE asked for all-purpose science stories that would encompass all that is attractive about the pursuit of truth. It must have been quite difficult because although you sent in plenty of entries most were more like headlines than substantive stories. Which perhaps explains why our model—"My God," said the Duchess, "I've been raped! Who done it?"—is so excellent; it really is a story and although it lacks a resolution it is complete. And that brings us to another point. If you think it's easy thinking these things up, you're probably right, but that doesn't mean we couldn't use some help. Please send in ideas, and although we cannot guarantee to use them all we will use the best ones.

Now, to the report of results. As usual when we allow multiple chances, some single attempts were very good indeed, so a selection of those and then the full prize winners.

Low cholesterol in badgers link with pensioners' disease. *E. Blackburn*

New hope for dead. *Raymond Matthei*

Oxygen found to cause premature ageing and death. The US Food and Drug Administration has banned its use pending further investigation.
Martin Garnett

Discovery of preserved Pleistocene man disproves new scientific theory on the connection of glue sniffing with Halley's comet. *S. A. Estcourt-Webb*

Scientists shaken by report that red shift causes Sun's wobble. Resultant wave energy may power Space Shuttle.
D. O. Pitches

Are neutrinos God's messengers? Computer analysis breaks the code.
D. R. Reed

Volcanic eruptions blamed for increase in number of miscarriages among American athletes; and

2-4-D causes haemophilia in schizophrenics; link with crime figures.
Anne Handley

Those were almost-winners. Here now are the two £5 book token winners:

Russian scientist predicts complete atomic decomposition of silicon by 1990 unless birth pill stopped.

Anti-matter found in Jupiter's ice-cap by secret Chinese satellite probe.

Wigan sixth-formers find major loophole in Einstein's theory.

American psychologist suggests link between American psychology and American psychologists.

Public indifferent to Home Office proposal for nuclear dumping ground near Waterloo Station. *Ray Newport*

The final winner did more than we asked and told us where his stories would be appearing, which adds greatly to the fun.

For readers of *The News of the World*:

VIVISECTION IN SPACE HORROR!

We denounce plans for animal tests to study effect of radiation on Skylab astronauts' sex drive.

For listeners to BBC radio:

Tonight on Radio 3 (VHF only: Scotland only), *Scientifically Implausible*—John Maddox learns from Professor Sir James Lepton FRS OBE how his work on neutrino-neutrino interactions in chloroplast DNA may lead to a new source of energy.

For readers of *Undercurrents*:

How junk food fouled up on the group dynamics of a project to map windmill sites on ley lines.

For readers of the *Guardian*:

Tokyo: A group protesting that deep ocean nuclear waste is decimating the whale population yesterday caused an outbreak of hysteria in parliament by spraying 2-4-5-T into the chamber.

For readers of *Omni*:

Exclusive: *Images of Genius*—a full colour photo-spread featuring a computer tomographic scan of E. O. Wilson's left frontal lobe. Text by Robert Heinlein. First of a new series. *Jon Turney*

Thanks to you all.

* * *

FOR this month's competition we turn to Westminster. As a correspondent remarks, rowdy scenes in the House of Commons must occasionally make Mrs Thatcher wish she had never left the cool clear depths of science for the murky shallows of politics. In anticipation of the joyous day, *New Scientist* readers are invited to provide her with not more than 150 words of a suitable draft of either:

A letter of resignation to the Queen, explaining this impending U-turn in her career, or

A letter of application for any of the scientific posts advertised in this week's issue of *New Scientist*.

One entry only, and get it here by 7 October. □

Letters

Rabies in foxes

The recent article by Philip Bacon and David Macdonald on rabies in foxes (28 August, p 640) is excellent in drawing attention to an important aspect of the epidemiology of rabies.

Furious rabies in both horses and cattle is well recognised (see for example *Veterinary Medicine* by Blood and Henderson). There are plenty of other records of the enormous damage which rabid horses and cattle can do to strongly built stables, their ability to escape from these and the injuries they can inflict.

I also question the qualified and ambiguous statement that in foxes the period between infections is only a month. It is not clear what the authors wish to convey. While I accept that there are some minor physiological and some major reproductive differences between foxes and dogs, the incubation period in dogs (if that is what Bacon and Macdonald allude to) is normally within approximately three months but can be as long as 9 to 10 months, and periods in excess of 12 months have been reported. There seems no reason why this should be any different in foxes.

It seems to me that this long incubation period would enable foxes in search of a territory to travel very considerable distances before setting up a new focus of disease many months after they had become infected. It is obvious that we need information on this possibility.

The article very rightly draws attention to the possible risks that oral vaccines may revert to full pathogenicity. Lest anyone thinks that vaccination is the answer, especially for domestic pets by parenteral administration, it is important to emphasise that clinical rabies, albeit at a low level, is well known to occur in dogs and cats which have received careful parenteral vaccination; like all vaccinations, that for rabies can never be expected to be 100 per cent effective. Those of us involved in the "mass medication" of large numbers of livestock are aware of considerable problems involved and the more than occasional failures. There is no reason to suppose that this would be any different with rabies vaccination for wild foxes.

O. Swarbrick MRCVS *Arundel*

Suspected carriers

Philip Bacon and David Macdonald's article on rabies presents a way by which Phil Drabble's plea for the vaccination of cattle against tuberculosis (Letters, 4 September, p 733), rather than the killing of suspected badger carriers, may usefully be turned on its head. If badgers could be vaccinated the cost would be minute compared with that for trapping and gassing and an end would be in sight. Conservationists would be happy and farmers need no longer worry. The snag of course, as in rabies, is in developing the right vaccine.

The Ministry of Agriculture will not consider any vaccination for cattle because it could mask the test by which animals actually infected with the disease are picked out. Badgers would need a live vaccine distributed in bait which could spread and protect the population, but if it spread back to cattle the animals would react to the test as if they had the disease itself and so be slaughtered needlessly. Understandably the ministry has discounted any hope for this sort of solution.

There may, however, be a way round the problem. It has been suggested (though this has not yet been followed up) that an inverse relationship may exist between the incidence of bovine tuberculosis in badgers and vole tuberculosis in the wild vole population. If by eating the infected voles badgers become naturally immunised, it might account for the fact that in most of the country they do not carry bovine tuberculosis though cattle undoubtedly could have spread the infection there in the past. Vole tuberculosis has not affected the cattle-testing programme and has been tried in the past as a vaccine similar to BCG. There is at least a hope that research along these lines could come up with the "suitable and practical answer" so desperately needed.

In the meanwhile, it is inevitable that some gassing will continue where both cattle and badgers are found to be infected but this must be seen as an interim measure, until a wide and coordinated programme of research produces some long-term policy that has a chance of success.

"The considerable efforts in trapping and gassing [foxes] have apparently done little to contain the spread" of rabies and "may even be counter-productive". Is there any reason to think that the same policy for badgers is likely to give any better results for bovine tuberculosis?

Eunice D. Overend Trowbridge

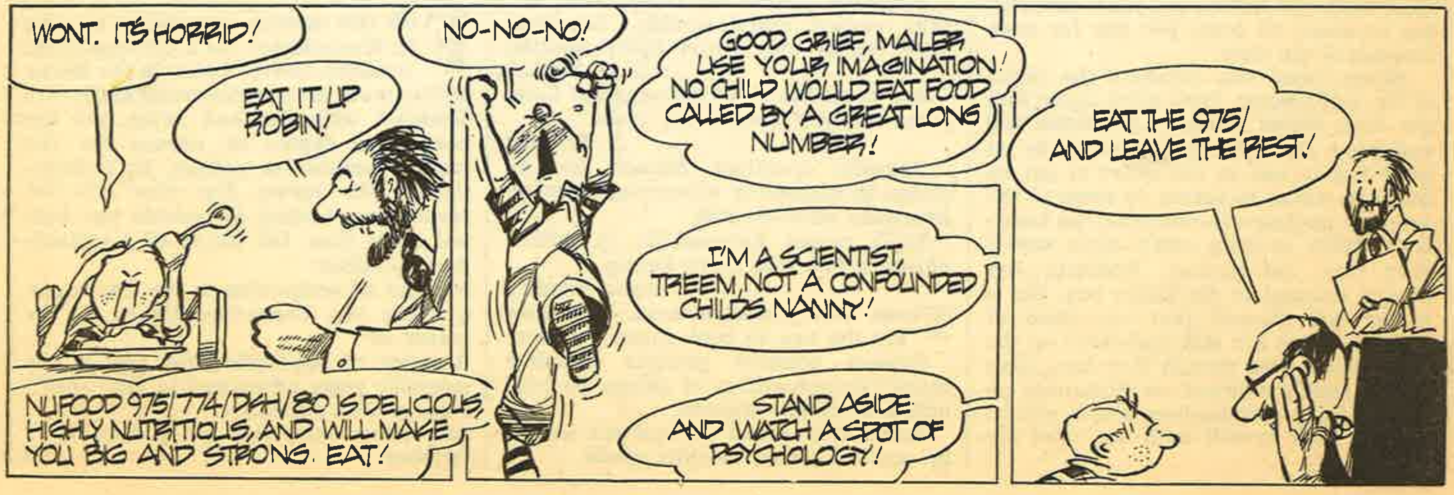
Quantum theory and relativity

Basil Hiley's article "Ghostly interactions in physics" (*New Scientist*, vol 85, p 746) gives us some idea of the fundamental importance of experiments currently being carried out to test the predictions of quantum theory over large distances. In particular he is correct in saying that quantum theory, while triumphantly correct on the atomic scale, "presents some disturbing philosophical problems, including the possibility of action at a distance".

However, I believe that Hiley has not fully succeeded in conveying the crucial nature of these experiments. The point is that, as already pointed out in 1935 by Albert

Grimbledon Down

Bill Tidy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